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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003012

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/20/2015

TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM KISL I2

SUBJECT: NOT A DONE DEAL: SUNNI WITHDRAWAL FROM  
CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Following the July 19 assassinations of Sunni representatives to the Constitution Drafting bodies, the media has reported that the entire Sunni contingent had withdrawn from the constitution drafting process. While there is some confusion even amongst our Iraqi interlocutors as to whether this is the case, it appears that Sunni participation in the constitution development process has been only temporarily suspended and Committee members are taking time to mourn their slain colleagues. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) Angry and grief stricken Sunnis openly contemplated withdrawal from the constitution development process at the July 20 session of the Transitional National Assembly. Deputy Constitution Committee Chair and head of the Sunni delegation Adnan al-Janabi demanded guards and a security budget for Sunni representatives to the Committee that is on par with that provided to other TNA members. In a side meeting during today's session, Speaker Hajim al-Hassani and Qassim Daoud agreed to provide the Sunnis with 15 guards -- the number allotted to other TNA members -- and a budget for the purchase of an appropriate vehicle.

¶3. (C) Al-Janabi exchanged heated words with al-Hassani both inside and outside the July 20 session, complaining that the condolence statement read during the Assembly by Daoud, who has essentially broken with the Iraqiya bloc, was inappropriate. Daoud described Mujbil Ali Haseen al Shaykh Issa as a member of the Dulaimi tribe rather than the Nuami tribe. Additionally, al-Janabi felt he should have read the statement, not Daoud.

¶4. (C) The National Dialogue's Dr. Saleh Mutlak expressed his anger at the refusal of the TNA to support the new -- and threatened -- Sunni members to the Constitution Committee. He said TNA authorities had delayed even badging the new members and had not made any moves to support their personal security. He also stated that the Karada neighborhood where Mujbil Issa and others were killed is well patrolled by Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), who did nothing to protect his colleagues.

¶5. (C) Both al-Janabi and Mutlak told reporters that they are suspending Sunni participation on the Constitution Committee, and today's meeting was cancelled. It remains unclear, however, whether the suspension is because the Sunnis were attending today's funeral for the slain Committee members or a step out the door entirely.

¶6. (C) Dr. Hasib Saleh al Obeidi told PolOff while traveling north to the slain committee members' village of Hawija that he and several other committee members (most likely other National Dialogue representatives) would be in mourning for two days and did not intend to return to Baghdad before that time. Obeidi said there had not yet been any decision to withdraw but predicted National Dialogue members would come to some consensus on how to proceed.

¶7. (C) Dr. Ala'a Sadoun, an Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) representative to the Committee, said the group did not attend today's TNA meeting, but was considering attending on July 21. IIP's Dr. Ayad Samarra'i also did not mention to PolOff any planned withdrawal.

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COMMENT  
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¶8. (C) It is far from clear whether the Sunnis do, in fact, intend to withdraw from the constitution process permanently, despite press reports that this is already a 'fait accompli.' An encouraging sign is that Sunni interlocutors have indicated they will go forward with a meeting planned for this evening with the Charge. Post will press Sunni leaders hard to continue participation in the constitution drafting process. Post will also strongly urge the Government, as PolCouns did today in a discussion with Prime Minister Jafari, to provide adequate security --at least on par with that provided to other TNA members -- to the Sunni members of the Constitution Committee. END COMMENT.

¶9. (U) REO HILLA, REO BASRA, REO MOSUL, and REO KIRKUK, minimize considered.

Satterfield